

# JOSEPH O' DOHERTY

Architectural & Engineering Services

THE STRAND FIELD  
BELLURGAN,  
DUNDALK,  
CO. LOUTH.

Our Ref.: JOD/JOD  
Your Ref.:

Date: 18/12/20

**Forward Planning Unit**  
Development Plan Review  
Louth County Council  
Town Hall,  
Crowe Street,  
Dundalk.  
A91 W20C

## **Draft Louth County Development Plan 2021-2027**

**Re: Submission on Draft Louth County Development Plan**  
**Client: Joseph O'Doherty**

### **Objection to the proposal by Forward planning to introduce the majority of the Cooley peninsula into a rural policy Zone 1.**

Dear Planners

I understand and accept the need to control planning in the rural countryside, especially in areas of high demand and in areas of high scenic quality or outstanding natural beauty. But to basically make all the land from Ballymascanlon roundabout to Carrickcarnan over to Omeath, down to Carlingford, The Bush, over through Lordship, Bellurgan & back to Ballymascanlon a no planning zone for one off house, will do two things.

Firstly it will deny natives of the above rural areas their right to continue to live in their rural communities.

Secondly it will put huge pressure on the area Rural Policy Zone 2, the lower lands from Lordship to Carlingford.

To expand on the above, people who were born or reared for most of their life in the rural countryside should be afforded the right to continue to live in their area, if so desired.

There are people who live in towns, who would never wish to live in the countryside and people who live in the countryside who would never wish to live in a town or city.

If you were born and reared in the countryside it becomes your home, your native surroundings, what you are accustomed to, you become part of a rural community and the rural community becomes part of you. Similarly for people who are born and reared in a town or city.

Some people from towns or cities decide they would rather live in the countryside and some people from the rural countryside decide they would rather or don't mind living in a town or city. But for the most part people who are reared in the countryside from childhood to adulthood would not like to be forced to live in a town setting. By introducing the rural Zone 1 you are forcing them from rural surroundings, their native environment, to them their natural habitat and to go and live in a local town or some other rural part of county Louth which in time will also be restricted.

The proposal by forward planning for rural policy zone 1 is draconian and only favours persons who own 3 hectares (7 acres) or more to a limited number of 2 children.

## **The need to curb planning in rural pressure zones**

I am a professional person involved in planning in county Louth for over 25 years and I accept that there needs to be control measures implemented in pressure zones.

There are plenty of ways to control the planning in Zone 1 as opposed to basically no planning. Firstly we need to look at what happened over the past 20 years. Approximately 20 years ago saw the start of a boom in Ireland, this boom as it progressed created some wealth and desire for some people to live in the more scenic areas of Louth.

This put pressure on these rural areas and thus the council created development centres to various locations throughout county Louth.

These development centres, Faughart, Bellurgan, Ravensdale, Lordship, Gyles Quay, Mountbagnal, didn't satisfy the needs of rural people as these sites were deemed by the past development plans as suitable for anybody from county Louth.

At least 50% of the houses & sites within these development centres were bought by people who were not local to the surrounding area, partly because they couldn't afford to buy them, because people from outside of the local area were allowed buy and live in same, which naturally drove the prices up.

The planning department has also discouraged against inland development in rural areas, they class it as ad hoc piecemeal back land development. This is not the case in rural areas, yes it is the case in urban areas where you don't want individual one-off sites behind another house, but instead want to utilise the back land area for a proper development of a well designed housing estate etc. But in rural areas this would not be the case or applicable as in there won't be any well organised estates behind a rural house and on the contrary I would be of the opinion to allow family members to build houses in a cluster beside or around the family home where possible would be much better planning, than ribbon development along the public road, and some of the houses may not even be visible from the public road our ancestors would have known these little family settlements as a "Clachan".

A prime example would be to look at Willville, Carlingford which was made a development centre some years back and now looks like a sub-urban street in the middle of the countryside, ribbon development at its worst's.

Restrictions were also imposed in the rural areas which these have worked to a certain extent to slow down rural growth.

The introduction of the development centres & restrictions on local housing while having slowed down the expansion in these rural locations, they are not enough to make a good impact on the pressure in these areas.

**But as opposed to practically making the area a no-planning zone, there are plenty of ways of enhancing the restrictions, to allow genuine natives to the area to continue to live in the area.**

**Here is my opinion on how to curb urban influenced pressure in rural areas.**

- 1) Small development centres that contain primary school, shop sports facilities and church etc would be suitable for some additional rural housing, but they would need to be limited to those within the immediate catchment area in order to satisfy local needs and to keep prices affordable.
- 2) Locals wishing to live in the local area would need to satisfy the follow criteria.
  - a) Have lived in the local area for a minimum of 18 years with extensive proof.
  - b) Own no other house in any rural part of county Louth for the past 10 years with solicitors letter of proof.
  - c) They could not sell the house for a minimum of 10 years, except to another member of the local community who meets all the criteria.
  - d) If the family own land then any old houses on said land would either have to be replaced with new house or renovated and extended for use by the local needs person or family member before they could continue with anymore.
  - e) Only locals who reside in Zone 1 can build in zone 1.
  - f) Reduce the catchment area for any locals to a 3km radius.
  - g) Maximum size of house 200m<sup>2</sup> or for each extra 1m<sup>2</sup> of floor area, to provide an extra 50m<sup>2</sup> of land, to ensure house size compatible with site sizes

- h) Ensure that all new houses provide new native hedges to the boundaries and in addition, at least 500m<sup>2</sup> of the site to be planted with trees, shrubs & flowers to provide habitat for wild life. This would make rural sites more eco friendly than grazing grasslands and help to offset the carbon footprint of building the house. This would need enforcement from the planning department, but would make a big different to rural landscape.
- i) Any family who live in zone 2 and own land in zone 1 would have to use the land in zone 2, unless there was none available.
- j) If really needed they could limit it to two family members sons or daughters can live in the local area, if they own or can purchase a site locally.
- k) It would be a tough call for those with more than 2 children that only 2 of them could live in the local area, but if it was really necessary, then people would have to except it.

**The current proposal of two sons or daughters of a family who own 7.4 acres or more is discrimination against people who may only own 1, 2 acres, or may not own any land and therefore favours the well off.**

**This could not be deemed acceptable in the present times, you could do that in a bygone era when landlords rule the country**

## Conclusion

In conclusion to go ahead with the current proposals would be draconian, bias & decimate rural communities in the proposed Zone 1. As when the current youth become of age they will have to move out of the rural area leaving a rural area full of aging people, the local GAA clubs, other sports facilities & primary schools would be empty, there would be little activity in shops etc. Until such time as all the elderly died then some of their sons and daughters may move back or may just sell on their parents houses, leaving communities of people not inherent to the area and no real belonging to the area and providing no real sense of community.

Furthermore an aging population needs carers to look after them, when siblings build close to their parents it's much easier for both parents and siblings to provide mutual care when needed. Parents can assist in minding their grandchildren, picking them up from schools etc. and siblings can provide care and support for their parents when they get old, that's what rural communities are about.

It should also be noted that a lot of people of late have opted to work from home due to the corona virus and that even after it's gone or safe to go back to work that a lot of them will still continue to work from home.

From my years of experience I believe that if the planning department were to introduce the items from 2) a) to i) above into a new development plan it would greatly ease the pressure in these rural areas.

If really needed to limit to two per family then it would have to be to all families not just those well enough off or lucky to own 3 hectares that would be discrimination.